

The Effect of Different Content in Dog Rescue Ads on Facebook

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Abstract

The effectiveness of different dog rescue advertisements was tested to find how persuasive certain forms of advertisements are. My results showed a significant difference in text only versus picture only advertisements. The results concluded that out of the 120 participants in the survey only 91 of which took the text only and picture only conditions, text only advertisements were more effective than picture only advertisements in convincing people to adopt the dog shown. Based on the open ended answers I received on the survey it was found that although people were willing to adopt with the picture only advertisement they were more wary about not knowing any information on the dog shown. There were concerns on the text only advertisements, the fact that the participants couldn't see the dog was a turn off but based on the information provided they were more likely to adopt. The results also suggest that in order for an advertisement to be effective the viewer has to already be willing to adopt and there has to be an emotional component of the advertisement to pull the viewer in. It was also concluded that men are more likely than women to respond to pictures in advertisements. Although my results were surprising both of the research questions and the hypothesis had statistically significant findings.

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Introduction

This study examines the relationship between pictures and the emotional response that they pull from viewers. Specifically this research investigates the relationship between college aged students and their emotional responses to content in dog rescue advertisements on social networking sites. The research will focus on the best way for non-profit dog rescue organizations to utilize Facebook or other social networking sites to interact with potential adopters and/or supporters. The differences in advertisement content include: text only, picture only and finally picture and text. These three forms of media content will answer which combination will convince the most people to respond to a request for help from a non-profit dog rescue advertisement. I believe that dog rescue advertisements that include both picture and text will receive the best responses in regards to the viewer feeling the most empathy towards the animal in need of help. Literature in this study will outline information regarding persuasion, social networking sites, and media.

Research Problem

As the economy gets worse more people are having their homes foreclosed upon, and more pet owners are dropping their pets off at shelters. With this increase in the number of pets arriving, it is getting to the point where shelters are turning away pets (Goodman 2008). Adoption numbers are increasing, due to discounts and easy adoption. At one Sacramento shelter “71 percent of dogs brought in wind up in caring homes or with other rescue groups (Truesdell 2009, pg 71).” Despite the rise in adoption’s there is an increase in euthanizing animals that aren’t adopted (Goodman 2008). In Dallas, GA 151 animals were euthanized in one month, the following month yielded higher euthanizing rates (Goodman 2008). As the number of animals arriving increases, it is becoming more vital for shelters to find more effective ways to advertise

as space and time are running out. Social Networking sites provide one such means of advertising, and their potential for meeting this need is the subject of this study.

Reaching Out

An activist public has been defined as "a group of two or more individuals who organize in order to influence another public or publics through action that may include education, compromise, persuasion, pressure tactics or force (Grunig 1992)." Taylor, Kent, and White discuss how the internet is a cost-effective way to reach the masses. It is through social networking sites that these activist groups can reach out to the public.

Based on the findings by Mediaweek (2009) Facebook has proven that by using the masses to get the word out via social networking sites, fan base or the number of people in a group changes greatly overnight through word of mouth. As with all internet advertising, the creators have to reach out to the public with blogs and web-sites. Having only one form of social media will not be enough to hold viewers, the key is communication and contact. "Solely having a profile will not in itself increase awareness or trigger an influx of participation (Waters, Burnam, Lamm, and Lucas 2009)." It is through the content in Facebook advertisements being studied that non-profit organizations will find the most effective way to create participation from the general public. There are a total of three types of advertisements being researched in this project for emotional response: text and picture, text only, and picture only. It is through the difference of content being researched that an effective way to boost adoption at over filled shelters will be found.

Theoretical Grounding

Elaborated Likelihood Model

There are two theories that support my research Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) and Cognitive Dissonance Theory. The first is Richard Petty and John Cacioppo's Elaboration Likelihood Model. Petty and Cacioppo's research explains that there are two paths to persuasion the central route and the peripheral route. The central route is when a person thoroughly thinks through their options and what will happen when they make a decision. People who are under the influence of the central route try to think about the idea; they want to make sure it is good idea before they do it. They think through any repercussions that would come from doing whatever act it is they are being persuaded to do.

If someone was to use the peripheral route of persuasion they would be relying on different cues that would give them the opportunity to make a quick decision instead of mulling over the idea and taking longer to answer. The six cues that would help create a response are "Reciprocation (you owe me), Consistency (We've always done it that way), Social proof (Everybody's doing it), Liking (Love me, love my ideas), Authority (Just because I say so), and Scarcity (Quick, before they are all gone). (Petty & Cacioppo)"

This theory will further my research because the people who want to help out with these dog rescues online are essentially being persuaded to do so. The ads use the cues scarcity (When a dog is about to be euthanized), liking (not only will the dog like you but other people in the rescue will be forever indebted), and sometimes even reciprocation (if one rescuer helps out another on one case than the one being helped can return the favor at a later time). People don't part with their time or money for nothing; in general people like to be rewarded as suggested by

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Waters, Burnam, Lamm, and Lucas, (2009) it was shown that Facebook pages tripled over night when there was a reward offered to the masses.

What I found interesting about one advertisement I viewed was that there were posts for a dog from users in Missouri to California. I found the ad being cross posted on Facebook via a Flickr account created by the shelter. The shelter streams pictures of their animals where people can find them and then save/adopt them. The picture I viewed was uploaded to Flickr on December first, the same night that the dog was transported to a foster family all thanks to the Facebook postings.

In one study I read by Steinfield, Ellison and Lampe (2008) it talked about the relationships between people and how the social capital (connections we make online) and the rewards we get from making relationships through these online sites. This social capital has been linked to positive social outcomes, (Steinfield, Ellison, and Lampe 2008) in this case saving the dog was the positive outcome. This reward of saving the dog and posting its picture across Facebook falls under central route thinking. Instead of making a snap decision and actually saving the dog, these viewers thought out what their options were. They voiced their opinions on the flickr account by stating why they couldn't adopt the puppy but they hoped she would get saved, and because they can't save the dog themselves they post the picture on their Facebook account in hopes that by doing so the dog will be saved. They thoroughly think through their actions when they decide to make themselves known on these dog posting and promise to post the picture on their pages.

Cognitive Dissonance

A second theoretical perspective that applies to the research is Leon Festinger's Cognitive Dissonance Theory. In this theory "Festinger hypothesized three mental mechanisms that people use to ensure that their actions and attitudes are in harmony. Dissonance researchers refer to them as selective exposure, postdecision dissonance, and minimal justification. (Festinger)"

Selective exposure is based on the idea that people who are like minded stay together, we are selective about the people we associate with and the material and information that we take in about certain events that are offered to us. One example would be that if a person was invited to a dog rescue group on Facebook, they would only join if so many of their friends were in it otherwise they wouldn't have any interest in the group.

Postdecision Dissonance takes place after a decision has been made, this process involves whether or not the issue is important enough to change, how long it has been since the decision was made, and how difficult it would be to change the idea. This would equate to somebody adopting a dog but then after getting the dog home second-guessing themselves and wondering if they made the right choice.

Minimal Justification is based on being able to get participants to do the behavior first, before they change their attitude instead of changing their attitude in order for them to change their behavior, give the least reward possible in order to do this. This theory can be compared to, convincing someone to adopt a dog before they change their mind on dog adoptions.

This theory will further my research because the post-decision is just as important as the pre-decision. A person is more likely to stick to a dog-rescue if they feel it was the right decision.

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It is easy enough to quit a rescue, so by studying what motions someone is likely to go through after either joining a rescue or adopting a dog it will be easier to reassure them that what they are doing is indeed the right thing to do. In order to persuade someone both the beginning and ending decision has to be studied in order to understand the entire persuasion process.

Persuasion, Social Networking Sites and the Media

This literature review will be split into three parts: persuasion, social networking sites, and media. The persuasion part of this review will contain information regarding advertisements and information supporting the idea that advertisements and pictures can create an emotional response from viewers in the form of empathy. The social networking section of the review will cover what a social networking site is, how organizations are utilizing these sites and why it is important. Finally the media section of the review will cover the different forms of media in social networking sites and how effective text and graphics work together to maintain a viewers interest.

Persuasion

Persuasion as it pertains to this research is through the use of advertisements, and being able to create empathy in the viewer. According to Hoffman (2000), empathy is “the involvements of psychological processes that make a person have feelings that are more congruent with another’s situation than with his own situation.” Based on findings by Kaplan (2008) it is shown that although one picture may create empathy, the more pictures that are shown the empathy dissipates. The key to knowing this is to know when to stop, Kaplan (2008) discusses how one picture can create empathy, making it possible for photographs to create an emotional response but when multiple pictures are used in succession the empathy goes away.

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In a research conducted by Baird, Wahlers and Cooper (2007) it was found that advertising with emotional appeal can lead to a more positive outlook on the company. Based on finds by Poels and Dewitte (2006) there are four processing steps to taking in advertisements: attention, interest, desire, and affect. For example the attention as it applies to this study would be first noticing the advertisement, followed by interest when someone clicks on the ad, this action is then followed by desire of whether or not they help, and it is based on that desire whether or not the animal is helped at that instant.

In a book by Sontag (1977) she wrote about how when she was a young girl she saw pictures from the holocaust. She discussed how she felt as if something had broken inside her and she felt wounded, as if something inside her had died. Kaplan (2008) discussed in her research how “Sontag has been essentially transformed by the experience of seeing the holocaust photographs.” Kaplan (2008) also brought up in the article that witnessing is needed to realize the injustice being done and that the difference between witnessing and empty empathy in the way of photos is. “...empathic sharing entails closeness but may lead to the over-arousal of vicarious trauma, or the sentimentalism of empty empathy.”

The research on pictures creating an emotional feeling in a viewer have been researched in the way of catastrophe by Kaplan (2008), this will relate to my study by showing that empathy and feelings can be generated by simply viewing a photograph. Research has also been done by Rupp and Wallen (2007) that discusses the sexual interests of men and talk about how men respond more to the visual than women, who prefer the contextual images; women want a story behind the image. This will help when I send out my survey to test which sex is more likely to respond to the visual images in a dog rescue advertisement, men or women.

To this point research has not been done on pictures of social networking sites in the way of creating any kind of emotional appeal. I will be using this research done on pictures and catastrophe to tie in with the relationships formed via social networking sites to find out whether or not people can be connected by an emotion created through a photo on one of their social networking sites. As it was discussed in literature by Kaplan (2008), Homeward Bound (2004), Poels and Dewitte (2006), Baird, Wahlers, and Cooper (2007), Rupp and Wallen (2007) images can in fact have a positive reaction from the viewers of images. The content and number of pictures being used can have an effect on the overall persuasion of a person. It was found throughout these studies that emotion must be in place before action is taken.

Social Networking Sites

Much attention has been devoted to research involved in the effects of social networking sites and connections made through them. These online social networking sites allow people to connect with users sharing the same interests all while staying independent of other users (Acar, 2008). Social networking sites can be defined as websites that construct a profile within a bounded system, form a list of users that people share a connection with, and make a list of these connections within a system (Boyd & Ellison 2007).

These sites are being used by marketers to “to explain who they are, what they do, and how they interact with their customers (Dillenberger 2009).” Companies are getting their customers to spread the word of their websites through word of mouth via Facebook (Mediaweek 2009). These activist groups are also using social networking sites as a means to get their name out and provide basic information. Based on finds by Taylor, Kent, and White (2001) however the organizations are not utilizing the sites to their fullest potential. It was found by Taylor, Kent,

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and White (2001) that using the internet levels the playing field between larger corporations and activist organizations, although most seem to lack dialogue.

Research found by Waters, Burnett, Lamm, and Lucas (2009) agrees with Taylor, Kent, and White (2001) that non-profits have not utilized Facebook to its fullest. They found that most sites disclosed, "...a description of the organization's programs and services, an organizational history, the mission statement, the organization's Web site, the logo, and a listing of the administrators of the profile." They were lacking in contact information as well as media such as photographs, videos, and announcements. Waters, Burnett, Lamm, and Lucas (2009) did find some variations of media and contact information on the Facebook profiles of various non-profit organizations but they were not being utilized in the most efficient way. As pointed out in the studies by Waters, Burnett, Lamm, and Lucas (2009) and Taylor, Kent, and White (2001) by not keeping viewer's attention these organizations are losing clients.

These non-profit organizations should look into utilizing Kent and Taylors (1988) five principles that organizations should follow to connect with the community. These five principles are: dialogic loops (interaction between viewer and organization via the inter-web), ease of interface (ability to navigate the site), conservation of visitors (providing a web-site that viewers want to explore), generation of return visits (providing information and connectivity that welcomes return visits), and providing relevant information (not overloading viewers with useless information that will take away from the site).

Social Networking Sites allow users to form trust which is necessary for successful engagement in group activities (Valenzuela, Park, & Kee, 2009). The research that pertains to group activities and connections on Facebook will relate to the users who interact with each other to help rescue dogs in need of help. That particular part of the research has not been done.

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Social Networking Sites as it pertains to my research has been looked at in the way of forming relationships through these sites with people one on one but not through organizations and as a way to come together for a cause.

Media

In an article by Samsup Jo and Yungwook Kim (2003) “Participants felt more community involvement when interactivity was used with text orientation (Jo and Kim 2003).”

There has also been research involved with viewer’s response to different content on websites. In Taylor, Kent and White (2001) it was found that activist organizations provide information but no concrete way to interact with the site, and because there is no interaction the viewer loses interest and a client is lost. They also determined that when there is an overload of pictures the viewers lost interest because there was no information supplementing the picture to hold their interest. It has been researched by Taylor, Kent, and White (2001) that a mixture of text and picture in an organized way will hold a viewer longer on a webpage.

Based on the research by Baird, Wahler, and Cooper (2007), images have different levels of emotional appeal in advertising but the different levels do not affect one’s ability to remember the advertisement. They actually found that when an emotional stimulus was present in an advertisements females were more likely to remember the ad than the men. Their findings concluded that if the target audience is predominantly female then using emotional stimuli in an advertisement could be proven effective, but not so, if the target audience is predominantly male based.

In an article titled Homeward Bound (2004) the idea of funny ads and a picture can increase the number of adopters at a shelter. Delucchi as discussed in the article writes a funny

advertisement every week about an animal at the shelter he volunteers at. These advertisements are then placed in the local newspaper accompanied by the animal's picture. These funny advertisements consequently persuade more people to visit the shelter he volunteers at to adopt. Since Delucchi started writing these advertisements all but one of the animals has been adopted (Homeward Bound 2004).

This research conducted by: Samsup Jo and Yungwook Kim (2003), (Homeward Bound 2004), Taylor, Kent and White (2001), and Baird, Wahler, and Cooper (2007), will further my research in the way that it will support my hypothesis and research questions based on the research that has already been done involving content of media on social networking sites and the internet in regards to organization websites.

Research Questions and Hypothesis

The following questions were based off of research I acquired on advertisements, persuasion of photographs, and non-profit groups on social networking sites.

H1: If non-profit organizations post pictures with their stories then ladies will most likely respond to the request for help.

This hypothesis was created to find whether or not there is a difference in how male and female participants react to different dog rescue ads. This was the primary focus of my study, to find out whether or not dog rescue advertisements affect males and females differently or if there is one way that will appeal to both sexes. There is research that supports males being more effected by visual images and research that supports females being more effected by emotional stimuli in advertisements. My thought is that dog rescue advertisements are out to create emotional stimuli and from that stimulus females will respond more to the advertisements.

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RQ1: How are non-profit dog rescues able to best utilize social networking sites to create the most participation from the general public?

RQ2: How can non-profit dog rescues best utilize Facebook to interact with potential adopters?

These two questions were created to determine what the best way for dog rescue advertisements to interact with Facebook users. In order to make an advertisement effective it is pertinent to understand what content works and what does not. These two questions are to further develop the hypothesis. If there is not a difference in content preference in males and females than the next step is to determine what does work, and what has to be pre-existing in order to make the different advertisements more effective.

Methodology

Participants

Participants will be college students who agree to voluntarily participate in the research. The purpose of the research was explained to the students and they were asked to participate with the provision that they were free to withdraw from the survey at any time without penalty. I chose to survey college students because not only was it convenient but it also limited the variables I had to take into consideration when analyzing my data. In order to attain participants I created a Facebook page that I invited college student to.

Procedures

The research was conducted anonymously via SurveyMonkey.com. At the beginning of the survey there was a disclaimer saying that the participant gave their consent to take the

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survey. The disclaimer explained that there were pictures of dogs from rescues, and that the pictures and/or story involved could be emotionally trying depending on their attachment to dogs. Based on each form of advertising I asked open ended questions to get more detailed information on how the person felt and reacted to the photo and/or story, whether or not they would indeed help the animal in the advertisement. To filter out non-college students there was a question directly after the disclaimer asking whether or not the participant was in fact a college student.

Survey questions regarded the participant's interaction with dog rescue advertisements and use of Facebook as well as birth month. Using the add logic button feature of SurveyMonkey the subjects were sent to one of three different survey conditions based on their answer of birth month. Each condition contained three advertisements that were taken from a Facebook application "Save a Dog." Based on the advertisements viewed closed ended questions were created to determine how effective the participants felt the advertisements were in creating an emotional reaction.

Asking questions such as the participants' likelihood to click on the advertisements at the beginning and end of the survey and if the participants were male or female that I was able to answer my hypothesis. The two research questions were answered by comparing the effectiveness of the three conditions and how people felt about the advertisements. The hypothesis and research questions were analyzed using correlation and t-tests on certain questions within the survey.

Variables

The variable in my study consisted of different content in dog rescue advertisements and what mixture of content is the most effective.

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable in this study contained different content mixtures of Facebook dog rescue advertisements. One variable was the dog rescue advertisement that contained only a picture. Another variable was the dog rescue advertisement that contained text only. An additional variable was the advertisement that contained both picture and text. Each of the variables present are used by dog rescues to convince the public to help with their rescue. Each variable was split into its own condition in the survey so that questions could be answered regarding the effectiveness of each form of advertisement.

Independent Variable

There were a few different independent variables in my study; one had to deal with whether or not the participant was male or female. This helped to determine what sex was more affected by the picture in dog rescue advertisements. Another variable was how likely the participant was to click on dog rescue advertisements before and after seeing their respective advertisements in the survey. An additional variable was how much the participant liked dogs and how likely they were to adopt a dog. The age and number of participants were also independent variables.

Conditions

There were three dog rescue advertisement conditions in the survey. Participants were divided into each condition based on their birth month. The three conditions were: picture and detailed information (May-August), text only (Sept.-Dec.), and picture only (Jan.-April).

Each condition had three pictures of one advertisement type, and each condition had the same three dogs with the advertisements altered to fit each condition type. An example of one of

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the dogs and its altered advertisement formations can be seen in figure 1.

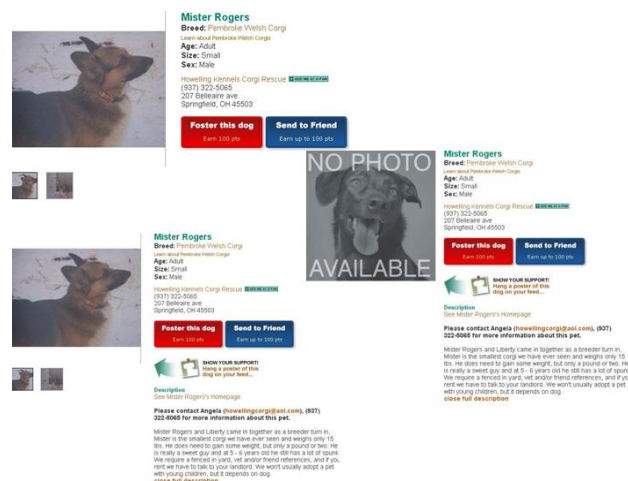


Figure 1

The three different conditions were meant to split the participants up and based on sex I hoped to find a difference in emotional effectiveness of ad content. The participants only got one advertisement form each because it was thought that giving one of each advertisement form would contaminate the study and responses. The study was to find the effectiveness of content in dog rescue advertisements not have each individual participant decide for themselves what advertisement they found to be the most effective. It was also decided that because there were three conditions that it would make most sense to use birth month to divide the participants into conditions.

Possible Risks

Due to the sensitive nature of the study, it was anticipated that participants may experience some emotional discomfort. Participants were informed of the nature of the study ahead of time. They were told that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time with no penalty. No physical harm was anticipated. Nor was it anticipated that participation in the research would place the participants at any risk of criminal or civil liability, or damage the participants' financial standing or employability.

Confidential Clause

Participants were informed of the nature of the study ahead of time, they were told that they were free to participate or not participate, and that they could withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Participants were instructed not to put their name or any identifying information on the survey. Since the survey was conducted via surveymonkey.com the researcher never came in physical contact with any of the participants and no data was viewed until the data collection process was over.

Results

I created a survey on SurveyMonkey.com for college students to participate in for data collection. I had 144 students take my survey while only 120 completed it. Everyone wanted to participate in the survey but only one was not a college student. The demographic requirement for my survey was that the participants be college students, beyond that there were no other requirements they had to meet. I used college students because it was a convenience sampling and so I would cut down on the amount of variables affecting the outcome of my survey.

The first sets of questions in my survey were Likert Scale ranging from strongly disagrees to strongly agree, these questions dealt with the persons level of interest in Facebook and interaction with dog rescue advertisements. After that students were split into three different conditions based on their birth month. Jan. - April were sent to dog rescue advertisements with just pictures, May-Aug. were presented advertisements with picture and text while people born in the months of Sept.-Dec. were presented with text only advertisements. This was to allow for clear results, so that participants were not comparing the three types of advertisements but instead making decisions based on the one form of advertisement.

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The rest of the questions in the survey were either multiple choice opinion questions or open ended questions. The open ended questions were meant to supplement the multiple choice questions to get a better idea of what participants were thinking/feeling as they answered various questions throughout the survey. Based on the answers to these questions I compared male to female answers to find if there were a correlation between type of advertisement effectiveness and sex. A correlation was created to find how appealing one advertisement was versus another type of advertisement in the survey.

Sex Differences in Rescue Ad Picture Persuasion

H1: Hypothesis 1 stated, that if non-profit organizations post pictures with their stories then ladies will most likely respond to the request for help. Hypothesis 1 was tested using a T-test. This hypothesis was proven wrong. Men are more likely to respond to pictures than females. These findings were supported by $t(37) = 2.686, p < .011$ with men reporting a higher likelihood of reacting to photographs than women $t(18.100) = 2.668, p < .016$ on a yes/no multiple choice question in the picture only condition.

Most Effective Condition

RQ1: RQ1 stated, how are non-profit dog rescues able to best utilize social networking sites to create the most participation from the general public? This question was created to find whether or not there really is one preferred form of advertisement over another. In a descriptive graph comparing the three different conditions present in my survey it was found that people are more likely to adopt when there is text only. This is supported by a mean of (4.4583) for text only, mean of (4.2195) for text and picture, and finally a mean of (3.9118) for the picture only condition. These answers were based off of an overall adopt by condition sampling from the answers provided for the survey.

This conclusion was further supported by comparisons between the various conditions in the study. It was found that there was a significant difference found between conditions one (picture only) and condition three (text only). The mean difference (I-J) was found to be (.54657) this mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level. The findings computed an overall adoption likelihood score for each of the conditions by adding the scores of the three individual items in each condition. Afterwards, an analysis was conducted to check for differences between the various conditions. All this meaning that participants were more willing to adopt based on an ad with text only than an ad with picture only given the option to choose between only those two forms. The picture and text ad was more in the middle, the likelihood to adopt based on the answers provided for text and picture did not yield a significant data difference with either of the other two conditions.

RQ2: How can non-profit dog rescues best utilize Facebook to interact with potential adopters? This question was created to find whether or not there was an advertisement that was more effective at getting people to click on the advertisement for viewing purposes. When a correlation was created between: general willingness to adopt, clicking on the rescue advertisements, likely to click on the advertisement, and advertisements creating an emotional reactions, two correlations were made. Clicking on rescue advertisements was a question placed at the beginning of the survey to determine how often people click on the advertisements in the first place. This clicking on the rescue advertisement question correlated when paired with the general willingness to adopt question created a Pearson Correlation of (.118) and a Sig (2-tailed) of (.028). These results correlated with the results created when general willingness to adopt and likely to click yes or no were paired. This pairing came up with a Pearson Correlation of (.201) and a Sig. (2-tailed) of (.027). This correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). These

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two questions both had to deal with the likelihood of someone clicking on the rescue advertisements, one was placed before the participants were divided into their conditions, and the second question was placed after they had finished answering questions in their conditions. In order for the advertisements to work there has to be a pre-existing willingness to adopt.

The second correlation was between: clicking on the rescue advertisements paired with likely to click on the advertisements, and clicking on the rescue advertisements paired with advertisements creating an emotional reaction. The first pairing created a Pearson Correlation of (.405) and Sig. (2-tailed) of (.000). While the second pairing created a Pearson Correlation of (.340) and a Sig. (2-tailed) of (.000). This correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed). The participants showed they would be more likely to click on an advertisement if it created an emotional response. In order for a rescue advertisement to be most effective at communicating with the public it needs to not only create an emotional appeal but it has to be marketed towards those already in the mindset that they would adopt a dog.

Discussion

The purpose of this study is to determine first, why people are drawn to advertisements, as in what type of content in dog rescue advertisements appeal to the public at large, and second to determine, what is the best way for dog rescues to get their message out, what advertisements are the most effective. My results are discussed below.

Persuasion in Rescue Ad Pictures

H1:H1 stated that if non-profit organizations post pictures with their stories then ladies will most likely respond to the request for help. This thesis was proven wrong; it was found that men would be more likely to respond to advertisements with pictures. This result is consistent

with prior research done by Rupp and Wallen (2007) who state “A common presumption in society and the media is that men respond more strongly to visual sexual stimuli than do women.” Although this sexual difference in stimuli is not understood fully, the presumption and scientific studies have found men respond more visually than women. Rupp and Wallen (2007) discuss the sexual interests of men and talk about how men respond more to the visual side of things, and women prefer the contextual images, as in they want a story behind the image.

According to, Baird, Wahler, and Cooper (2007) when an emotional stimulus was present in advertisements, females were more likely to remember the advertisement than the men. Their findings concluded that if the target audience is predominantly females then using emotional stimuli in an advertisement could be proven effective, but not so, if the target audience is predominantly male based. Research when it compares male and female stimulus to sexual arousal finds that men are more visual with their arousal, which is not so when talking about visual stimuli that creates an emotional reaction. Research supports that emotional stimuli in advertisements should create more of a response from females than males so it could be that my advertisements were not emotional enough.

Best Way to Interact and Persuade

RQ1: RQ1 stated, how are non-profit dog rescues able to best utilize social networking sites to create the most participation from the general public? Results showed that text only advertisements were preferred over picture only advertisements. This is against all research I found on the topic of advertisement content. According to Hoffman (2000) pictures can create empathy and as long as there are not multiple pictures used, the empathy will remain with the viewer. Baird, Wahlers and Cooper (2007) found that advertising with emotional appeal can lead to a more positive outlook on the company. Samsup Jo and Yungwook Kim (2003) found in their

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research that interactivity with text created a stronger community. Homeward Bound (2004) the idea of funny advertisements and a picture can increase the number of adopters at a shelter. In all the results I read by other researchers I found that pictures were the deciding factor in advertisements, even though text can help support the advertisement it was not the major factor. A visual stimulus is what pulls the viewers in.

RQ2: How can non-profit dog rescues best utilize Facebook to interact with potential adopters? The results found that dog rescue advertisements need to not only create an emotional appeal but it has to be marketed towards those already in the mindset that they would adopt a dog in the first place. Samsup Jo and Yungwook Kim (2003) found in their research that interactivity with text created a stronger community. Kaplan (2008), Homeward Bound (2004), Poels and Dewitte (2006), Baird, Wahlers, and Cooper (2007), found that images can in fact have a positive reaction from the viewers of images. Results from previous research support the idea that pictures create emotional appeal and that by utilizing this appeal, viewers will be more inclined to stay on the page. Taylor, Kent, and White (2001) found that a mixture of text and picture in an organized way will hold a viewer longer on a webpage. Research supports the results found in my study.

Limitations

The scope of my research is very limited; I chose a very specific advertisement type for my research. However, my hypothesis and both of my research questions were statistically significant. Future research could expand on the multimedia platforms used for dog rescue advertisements or even expand the research to include other non-profit organizations. This study could be applied to any number of non-profit organizations, I just happened to pick dog rescues

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for the basis of my research. I also limited the participants to being only college students, future research could expand to include more age groups and more variation in sex.

The major limitation I had was that I used only college students, because of this limitation I ended up having more females than males take my survey. Out of the 120 participants that completed my survey 91 were female this comes from the demographics of Longwood University. The majority of students are female so the likelihood of having just as many male as female participants was very unlikely.

Another limitation that I believe affected my survey results were the three conditions in the survey, 52 participants took the text only condition, 47 took the text and picture condition, and 39 took the picture only condition. The difference in number for each condition could affect the outcome of the results. For example if more males were born in the January to April time frame that could have skewed my results to show that males are more drawn to pictures than females. Not to mention the number of people that might not have strong feelings about dogs, the participants attachment level to dogs would also be a limitation for my survey results. The emotional appeal of the advertisements themselves would also be a limitation for my survey. The pictures themselves might not have been all that emotional in content.

Conclusion

The effectiveness of different dog rescue advertisements was tested to find how persuasive certain forms of advertisements are. My results showed a significant difference in text only versus picture only advertisements. The results concluded that out of the 120 participants in the survey only 91 of which took the text only and picture only conditions, text only advertisements were more effective than picture only advertisements in convincing people to

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adopt the dog shown. Based on the open ended answers I received on the survey it was found that although people were willing to adopt with the picture only advertisement they were more wary about not knowing any information on the dog shown. There were concerns on the text only advertisements, the fact that the participants could not see the dog was a turn off but based on the information provided they were more likely to adopt. The results also suggest that in order for an advertisement to be effective the viewer has to already be willing to adopt and there has to be an emotional component of the advertisement to pull the viewer in. It was also concluded that men are more likely than women to respond to pictures in advertisements. Although my results were surprising both of the research questions and the hypothesis had statistically significant findings.

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Appendix


The survey used is contained in this Appendix

Effectiveness of Different Content in Facebook Dog Rescue Ads
Default Section
<p>1. By completing this survey, I acknowledge that I am providing my consent to participate in this research project. I understand my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw participation at anytime and that my answers are anonymous and confidential. I also understand that this survey may contain emotional images/stories of dogs needing rescue from shelters. This research is being conducted by Chelsea Place as part of the requirements of Comm 461. If you have any questions regarding this research please contact Chelsea at Chelsea.Place@live.longwood.edu</p> <p><input type="radio"/> I agree to participate in this research.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> I do not wish to participate</p>
Filtering Question
<p>* 1. Are you a college student?</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes</p> <p><input type="radio"/> No</p>
Research Questions
<p>These questions will be to get a general idea of how you interact with dog rescues and dogs on a daily basis.</p> <p>1. How often do you see dog rescue ads per week in the media and on facebook?</p> <p><input type="radio"/> 1-3,</p> <p><input type="radio"/> 4-6,</p> <p><input type="radio"/> 7-9,</p> <p><input type="radio"/> 10+</p>

Effectiveness of Different Content in Facebook Dog Rescue Ads					
2. Please indicate the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements.					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
If I were in the position to, I would help rescue/foster a dog.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I respond emotionally to dog rescue ads I see in the media.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When rescue ads pop up on my internet screen I click on them.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would never own a dog.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I use facebook often.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
* 3. What is your birth month?					
<input type="radio"/> January-April, <input type="radio"/> May-August, <input type="radio"/> September-December					
Rescue Ad Picture Only					
<p>PLEASE READ: You are 35 years old making 80,000 a year. Just moved into a new house and are thinking about getting a dog. There are no restrictions. You do some research online and these are the ads you find. Based on the information given answer the questions accordingly. Please answer each open ended question in detail.</p>					

Effectiveness of Different Content in Facebook Dog Rescue Ads

These images are the ones that you find during your search, based on the content given answer the questions accordingly.




Baby URGENT Appomattox County P
Breed: Hound
Learn about English Foxhounds
Age: Puppy
Size: Medium
Sex: Male

The Humane Society for Campbell County, Inc. HERKIMER
(434) 821-3034
Post Office Box 659
Rustburg, VA 24588

Foster this dog
Earn 100 pts

Send to Friend
Earn up to 100 pts



1. Which part of the ad pops out at you when you first see this ad?

- ☐ The Picture,
- ☐ The Text,
- ☐ The Location,
- ☐ The Name,
- ☐ Urgent,
- ☐ The Blue and Red Buttons,
- ☐ The Age, Size, Sex, and Breed

2. If you were to see this ad while looking for a dog to own, what would your thoughts be on this ad after viewing it?


Effectiveness of Different Content in Facebook Dog Rescue Ads

* 3. Would you foster or adopt this dog?

☐ Yes,

☐ No

Explain your answer




Lacey
Breed: Corgi mix
Learn about Pembroke (Welsh) Corgis
Age: Adult
Size: Small
Sex: Female

Saving Furry Friends [11 reviews](#)
(276) 706-6477
PO Box 741
Glade Spring, VA, 24340
[Shelter Website](#)

Foster this dog
Earn 100 pts

Send to Friend
Earn up to 100 pts



4. Which part of this ad pops out at you first?

☐ The Picture,

☐ The Text,

☐ The Location,

☐ The Name,

☐ Urgent,

☐ The Blue and Red Buttons,

☐ The Age, Size, Sex, and Breed

If answer is different than first ad, what changed?

Effectiveness of Different Content in Facebook Dog Rescue Ads


5. If you were to see this ad while searching for a dog to own permanently what would your thoughts be on this dog?

* 6. Would you foster or adopt this dog?

☐ Yes,

☐ No

Explain your answer





Mister Rogers
Breed: Pembroke Welsh Corgi
Learn about Pembroke Welsh Corgis
Age: Adult
Size: Small
Sex: Male

Howling Kennels Corgi Rescue CLICK HERE TO FIND
(937) 322-5065
207 Belleaire ave
Springfield, OH 45503

Foster this dog
Earn 100 pts


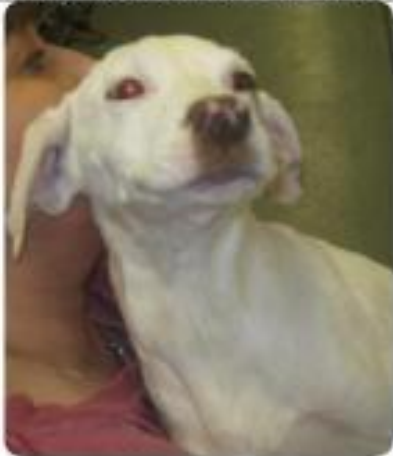
Send to Friend
Earn up to 100 pts



Effectiveness of Different Content in Facebook Dog Rescue Ads
<p>7. Which part of this ad pops out at you first?</p> <p><input type="radio"/> The Picture,</p> <p><input type="radio"/> The Text,</p> <p><input type="radio"/> The Location,</p> <p><input type="radio"/> The Name,</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Urgent,</p> <p><input type="radio"/> The Blue and Red Buttons,</p> <p><input type="radio"/> The Age, Size, Sex, and Breed</p> <p>If different than previous questions please explain</p> <div><div></div><div></div></div>
<p>8. If you were to see this ad while searching for a dog to own permanently what would your thoughts be on this dog?</p> <div><div></div><div></div></div>
<p>* 9. Would you foster or adopt this dog?</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes,</p> <p><input type="radio"/> No</p> <p>Explain your answer</p> <div><div></div><div></div></div>
<p>Rescue Ads Text and Picture</p> <p>PLEASE READ: You are 35 years old making 80,000 a year. Just moved into a new house and are thinking about getting a dog. There are no restrictions. You do some research online and these are the ads you find. Based on the information given answer the questions accordingly. Please answer each open ended question in detail.</p>

Effectiveness of Different Content in Facebook Dog Rescue Ads

These images are the ones that you find during your search, based on the content given answer the questions accordingly.



Baby URGENT Appomattox County Po

Breed: Hound
[Learn about English Foxhounds](#)
Age: Puppy
Size: Medium
Sex: Male

The Humane Society for Campbell County, Inc. **FOSTER**
(434) 821-3034
Post Office Box 659
Rustburg, VA 24588

Foster this dog Earn 100 pts
Send to Friend Earn up to 100 pts

Description
See Baby URGENT Appomattox County Pound's Homepage
Go to our official website

You can fill out an adoption application online on our official website

Baby is such a love--he just melts into your neck when you hug him. He is a love bug and just so appreciative of what you are giving him. He is younger than our own little Wags, but is just as needy, and is also about the same size as she, despite the fact he is older. To meet and adopt special Baby, please apply online directly to the pound in Appomattox County. Go to their website for information about adoption: <http://www.petfinder.com/shell/VA475.html>

[close full description](#)

1. What about this ad pops out at your first?

- ☐ The Picture,
- ☐ The Text,
- ☐ The Location,
- ☐ The Name,
- ☐ Urgent,
- ☐ The Blue and Red Buttons,
- ☐ The Age, Size, Sex, and Breed

Effectiveness of Different Content in Facebook Dog Rescue Ads

2. If you were to see this ad while looking for a dog to own, what would your thoughts be on this ad after viewing it?

* 3. Would you foster or adopt this dog?


☐ Yes,

☐ No

Please explain answer




Lacey
Breed: Corgi mix
[Learn about Pembroke Welsh Corgis](#)
Age: Adult
Size: Small
Sex: Female

[Saving Furry Friends](#) 
(276) 706-6477
PO Box 741
Glade Spring, VA, 24340
[Shelter Website](#)

Foster this dog **Send to Friend**

Earn 100 pts Earn up to 100 pts

  **SHOW YOUR SUPPORT!**
Hang a poster of this dog on your feed...

Description
Please contact Carolyn (savingfurryfriends@yahoo.com) for information about this pet. Lacey was rescued from a vet shelter down south almost 2 years ago. How she hasn't adopted yet escapes me. She's young, not too big or too gets along well with everyone and especially loves kids. big fan splashing around and playing in water. Don't let missing eye put you off – it doesn't slow her down a bit.

Effectiveness of Different Content in Facebook Dog Rescue Ads

4. What about this ad pops out at you first?

☐ The Picture,

☐ The Text,

☐ The Location,

☐ The Name,

☐ Urgent,

☐ The Blue and Red Buttons,

☐ The Age, Size, Sex, and Breed

If different than previous ad please explain

5. If you were to see this ad while looking for a dog to own, what would your thoughts be on this ad after viewing it?



* 6. Would you foster or adopt this dog?

☐ Yes,

☐ No

Please explain answer

Effectiveness of Different Content in Facebook Dog Rescue Ads





Mister Rogers
Breed: Pembroke Welsh Corgi
Learn about Pembroke Welsh Corgis
Age: Adult
Size: Small
Sex: Male

Howling Kennels Corgi Rescue NEWSPAPER
(937) 322-5065
207 Belleaire ave
Springfield, OH 45503

Foster this dog
Earn 100 pts

Send to Friend
Earn up to 100 pts

  **SHOW YOUR SUPPORT!**
Hang a poster of this dog on your feed...

Description
[See Mister Rogers's Homepage](#)

Please contact Angela (howellingcorgi@aol.com), (937) 322-5065 for more information about this pet.

Mister Rogers and Liberty came in together as a breeder. Mister is the smallest corgi we have ever seen and weighs 10 lbs. He does need to gain some weight, but only a pound is really a sweet guy and at 5 - 6 years old he still has a lot of life left. We require a fenced in yard, vet and/or friend reference and if you rent we have to talk to your landlord. We won't usually work with young children, but it depends on dog.

[close full description](#)

7. What about this ad pops out at you first?

☐ The Picture,

☐ The Text,

☐ The Location,

☐ The Name,

☐ Urgent,

☐ The Blue and Red Buttons,


☐ The Age, Size, Sex, and Breed

If different than previous questions please explain

Effectiveness of Different Content in Facebook Dog Rescue Ads
<p>8. If you were to see this ad while looking for a dog to own, what would your thoughts be on this ad after viewing it?</p> <div><div></div><div></div></div>
<p>* 9. Would you foster or adopt this dog?</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Yes,</p> <p><input type="radio"/> No</p> <p>Please explain answer</p> <div><div></div><div></div></div>
Rescue Ads Text Only
<p>PLEASE READ: You are 35 years old making 80,000 a year. Just moved into a new house and are thinking about getting a dog. There are no restrictions. You do some research online and these are the ads you find. Based on the information given answer the questions accordingly. Please answer each open ended question in detail.</p>

Effectiveness of Different Content in Facebook Dog Rescue Ads

These images are the ones that you find during your search, based on the content given answer the questions accordingly.



Baby URGENT Appomattox County Po
Breed: Hound
[Learn about English Foxhounds](#)
Age: Puppy
Size: Medium
Sex: Male

The Humane Society for Campbell County, Inc. [#400K8337](#)
(434) 621-3034
Post Office Box 659
Rustburg, VA 24588

Foster this dog Earn 100 pts
Send to Friend Earn up to 100 pts

Description
See Baby URGENT Appomattox County Pound's Homepage
Go to our official website

You can fill out an adoption application online on our official website.

Baby is such a love—he just melts into your neck when you hug him. He is a hound baby and just so appreciative of what we give him. He is younger than our own little Wags, but is just as needy, and is also about the same size as she, despite the fact he is older. To meet and adopt special Baby, please apply only directly to the pound in Appomattox County. Go to their website for more information about adoption; <http://www.petfinder.com/shelter/VA/475.html>

[close full description](#)

1. Which part of the ad pops out at you when you first see this ad?

- ☐ The Picture,
- ☐ The Text,
- ☐ The Location,
- ☐ The Name,
- ☐ Urgent,
- ☐ The Blue and Red Buttons,
- ☐ The Age, Size, Sex, and Breed

Effectiveness of Different Content in Facebook Dog Rescue Ads

2. If you were to see this ad while looking for a dog to own, what would your thoughts be on this ad after viewing it?

* 3. Would you foster or adopt this dog?

☐ Yes,

☐ No

Explain your answer



Lacey

Breed: Corgi mix

Learn about Pembroke Welsh Corgis

Age: Adult

Size: Small

Sex: Female

Saving Furry Friends RECOMMENDED

(276) 706-6477

PO Box 741

Glad Spring, VA 24340

[Shelter Website](#)

Foster this dog

Earn 100 pts

Send to Friend

Earn up to 100 pts



SHOW YOUR SUPPORT!

Hang a poster of this dog on your feed...

Description

Please contact Carolyn (savingfurryfriends@yahoo.com) for information about this pet. Lacey was rescued from a very h shelter down south almost 2 years ago. How she hasn't been adopted yet escapes me. She's young, not too big or too s gets along well with everyone and especially loves kids. She big fan splashing around and playing in water. Don't let the missing eye put you off — it doesn't slow her down a bit.

Effectiveness of Different Content in Facebook Dog Rescue Ads

4. Which part of this ad pops out at you first?

☐ The Picture,

☐ The Text,

☐ The Location,

☐ The Name,

☐ Urgent,

☐ The Blue and Red Buttons,

☐ The Age, Size, Sex, and Breed

If answer is different than first ad, what changed?

5. If you were to see this ad while searching for a dog to own permanently what would your thoughts be on this dog?

* 6. Would you foster or adopt this dog?

☐ Yes,

☐ No

Explain your answer

Effectiveness of Different Content in Facebook Dog Rescue Ads





Mister Rogers

Breed: Pembroke Welsh Corgi
[Learn about Pembroke Welsh Corgis](#)
Age: Adult
Size: Small
Sex: Male

Howling Kennels Corgi Rescue [more info](#)
(937) 322-5065
207 Belleaire ave
Springfield, OH 45503

Foster this dog
Earn 100 pts

Send to Friend
Earn up to 100 pts

**SHOW YOUR SUPPORT!**
Hang a poster of this dog on your feed...

Description
[See Mister Rogers's Homepage](#)

Please contact Angela (howellingcorgi@aol.com), (937) 322-5065 for more information about this pet.

Mister Rogers and Liberty came in together as a breeder b... Mister is the smallest corgi we have ever seen and weighs... lbs. He does need to gain some weight, but only a pound o... is really a sweet guy and at 5 - 6 years old he still has a lot... We require a fenced in yard, vet and/or friend references... rent we have to talk to your landlord. We won't usually ado... with young children, but it depends on dog.

[close full description](#)

7. Which part of this ad pops out at you first?

☐ The Picture,

☐ The Text,

☐ The Location,

☐ The Name,

☐ Urgent,

☐ The Blue and Red Buttons,

☐ The Age, Size, Sex, and Breed

If different than previous questions please explain

Effectiveness of Different Content in Facebook Dog Rescue Ads

8. If you were to see this ad while searching for a dog to own permanently what would your thoughts be on this dog?

* 9. Would you foster or adopt this dog?

☐ Yes,

☐ No

Explain your answer

Final Research Questions

These questions are based on the ads you viewed on the previous page and what you found effective about them. Please answer each open ended question in detail.

1. The ads were effective in creating an emotional reaction from me.

☐ Yes,

☐ No

2. What do you feel made this ad effective or not effective?

3. If you were to see an ad such as the ones you viewed on the previous page on facebook, would you click on them?

☐ Yes,

☐ No

Why or Why not?

Effectiveness of Different Content in Facebook Dog Rescue Ads

4. All the ads you just viewed and many more are all on facebook through an application, 'Save a Dog' knowing that are you likely to go searching for the application and/or recommend it to people you know?

☐ Yes,

☐ No

Why or Why not?

5. After viewing these ads do you feel that facebook could be an effective way to raise awareness and get dogs adopted? Why or why not?

6. If you were in the position to adopt/foster a dog would you use facebook as a tool to find an adoptable dog in your area?

☐ Yes,

☐ No

Why or Why not?

* 7. What is your sex?

☐ Male

☐ Female

Exit Page

Thank you for your participation in this research project.